

Historic Yorktown Design Committee

Minutes

March 22, 2006

East Room

York Hall

Yorktown, Virginia

Members Attending: Chuck Murray, Chairman
Jennifer Carver
Harvey Weinstein

Staff Attending: Mark Carter

Chairman Murray called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

The minutes of the November 16, 2005 meeting were approved unanimously.

Applications:

Application No. HYDC-13-06, Grace Episcopal Church: Request for approval of the installation of a freestanding sign to identify the Parish Gift and Book Shop on property located at 111 Church Street.

Chairman Murray led a discussion of the proposal following the summary of the pertinent design standards contained in the staff memorandum. There were no public comments on the application. After brief discussion, Mr. Weinstein moved that the application be approved. Ms. Carver seconded the motion, which carried 3:0.

Application No. HYDC-15-06, Edith Elliott: Request for approval of the installation of a 4-foot high picket fence along the front and side property lines of the parcel located at 210 Bacon Street on which a new residence is being constructed.

Chairman Murray led a discussion of the proposal following the summary of the pertinent design standards contained in the staff memorandum. Mr. Carter noted that Mrs. Elliott was unable to attend the meeting. There were no public comments on the application. After brief discussion, Ms. Carver moved that the application be approved. Mr. Weinstein seconded the motion, which carried 3:0.

Application No. HYDC 16-06, The Abingdon Group: Request for approval of the installation of a 4-foot high picket fence along the front and side property lines of the parcel located at 105 Ambler Street (corner of Ambler and Pulaski Streets).

Chairman Murray led a discussion of the proposal following the summary of the pertinent design standards contained in the staff memorandum. Mr. Michael Hedge, 107 Ambler Street (an adjoining property), asked what the setback of the fence would be on the side next to his property. Mr. Carter noted that the County zoning regulations do not require the fence to be offset from the property line. Ms. Melinda Smith, representing the applicant, responded that they would ensure that the fence does not encroach on Mr. Hedge's property. There being no other public comments on the application, Mr. Weinstein moved that the request be approved. Ms. Carver seconded the motion, which carried 3:0.

Application No. HYDC 14-06, G-Square, Inc.: Request for approval of the design and architectural features of a new building proposed to be constructed on Water street behind and between the existing Pub and Water Street landing restaurant buildings, both of which would remain.

Chairman Murray opened the discussion on the application. Mr. Brian Caro, Caro Monroe and Liang Architects and the applicant's representative, made a presentation on the proposal, referring to graphics of the proposed building elevations and samples of proposed building materials. Also in attendance were: Mr. Gil Granger, President, G-Square, Inc.; Dean Tsimouris and Rick Tanner, existing restaurants managers). He noted that the proposal includes construction of a new 200-seat upscale restaurant, several individual retail/office tenant spaces, and a partially covered parking area. He emphasized the extensive use of brick, noting that there would be no stucco or EIFS used on the building exteriors. He said the parcel presents design challenges and the proposed 7,500 square foot building is only 30 feet deep. He noted that the slope of the main roof was lower than the Guidelines recommend, but that was done to minimize impacts on the views from the bluffs. He said the steeper-pitched dormers and perpendicular gables were intended to compensate for the low slope of the main roof.

Mr. Carter provided a brief summary of the relationship between the Historic District/Design Guidelines process and the land use approval process that will be required under the terms of the YVA-Yorktown Village Activity District. He noted that the YVA process, which will involve public hearings by both the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, would address issues dealing with parking, setbacks, building height, etc. He said the YVA regulations require that the HYDC architectural design review process be completed prior to submission of the YVA application.

Chairman Murray opened the meeting for public comments.

Mr. George Sage, 112 Church Street, read excerpts from several sections (24.1-377(a)(1) and (2)) of the Statement of Intent section of the Yorktown Historic District regulations. He emphasized the points concerning compatibility and protection of views. He expressed concern that the proposed connection of a deck/walkway to the Church Street stairs would generate increased pedestrian traffic on Church Street that would be incompatible with its residential character. He said the limited amount of off-street parking included in the proposal would cause people to use the York Hall and Grace Church parking lots, neither of which was intended for commercial use.

Mr. Ira Krams, 105 Church Street, noted that he and his wife were in the process of restoring / renovating a house that had been constructed in 1919 and that commanded a wonderful view of the waterfront. He expressed concern that the proposed structure would adversely impact that view. He noted that the proposal to build the new structure back into the bluffs was a concern both from an engineering and aesthetic standpoint.

Mrs. Beverly Krams, 105 Church Street, noted that they actually own two residences – 105 and 107 Church Street – both of which have significant views of the waterfront. She said that she was very concerned about the impact of the proposed project on her property and noted that she felt it is too tall and includes too much floor area, too little open space, not enough off-street parking and that it will generate objectionable pedestrian traffic on Church Street. She urged the HYDC to remember the purposes for which it was created and to ensure that the adjacent residents' interests were protected.

Mr. Ron Leftwich, 226 Church Street, expressed concern about the clientele that would be attracted to the new restaurant. He said he and others were disappointed in the appearance of the service areas of the existing restaurants and he expressed concern about traffic and parking impacts.

Mrs. Karen Smith, 605 Main Street, asked what period of time were the Design Guidelines intended to protect/preserve? Chairman Murray noted that they were written to address the entire 300+ year history of Yorktown and were not specific to any single period of time. He said that the Guidelines for the Historic Core are more stringent than those for the Waterfront.

There being no other speakers, Chairman Murray closed the public comment period.

Chairman Murray noted that the Committee appreciated the comments from the applicant's representative and the public. He suggested that the HYDC consider tabling the application to allow time for reflection on those comments and further discussions with the applicant, citizens and staff. He recommended that the Committee also consider conducting an on-site work session to view the site and discuss concerns and options with the applicant and other interested parties.

Chairman Murray asked for discussion and comments from the Committee. He began by noting his concern about the long, unbroken roofline and asked Mr. Caro to consider ways to improve/preserve sight lines from the bluffs, including providing breaks between buildings. He said he did not think a flat-roofed structure would be appropriate, nor would a very low sloped roof. Mr. Caro noted that the parcel depth was a limiting factor and breaking the structure into multiple buildings would make the tenant spaces impractically small.

Ms. Carver noted a concern about the appearance of the parking structure and the views from Water Street into the covered parking bays. She also expressed concern about the rotunda element on the east end of the restaurant building and whether it is architecturally appropriate. Mr. Caro noted the similarly shaped turret feature on the Colonial Capitol building in Williamsburg.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Murray moved that the application be tabled to the April 19, 2006 HYDC meeting. Mr. Weinstein seconded the motion, which carried 3:0.

By consensus, the Committee decided to schedule an on-site work session for 6:00 pm on Tuesday, April 11, 2006 to allow discussion of the proposal with the applicant and other interested parties. Several suggestions were made concerning ways to simulate the proposed building height so that the impact on views could be considered. The applicant's representatives agreed to look into the suggestions.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Carter, Secretary